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Mahon Says Funds For Airborne Alert Will Be Multiplied

Congressman Sees A Period of Peril Beginning in 1961

By Jerry T. Baulch
Associated Press

Foreseeing a period of great peril for the Nation beginning in 1961, a key Democratic lawmaker indicated yesterday that Congress will multiply funds to provide for an airborne alert by U. S. bomber forces.

The Chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, Rep. George H. Mahon of Texas, said he thinks Congress will authorize three or four times the \$85 million asked by President Eisenhower to prepare for an airborne alert.

Such an alert would keep a substantial portion of American heavy bombers in the air at all times, fully armed with nuclear weapons, safe from any sneak attack on ground bases and in position to strike at enemy targets immediately after any atomic attack on this country.

Time of Peril

Speaking on the CBS television program "Face the Nation," Mahon agreed with Administration spokesmen that "this Nation is stronger than any nation in the world today" in overall striking ability. But, he said, the country is heading into a 3-year period, starting in 1961, when the Soviet Union's superiority in intercontinental ballistic missiles will present "the most frighteningly important situation that we have ever faced in our lives."

Mahon said "any town in this country could be hit in the next 30 minutes" by a Russian ICBM and we have no effective way of fending off such blows.

He expressed doubt that any such attack would come soon but foresaw a Russian missile superiority of about 3 to 1 in the critical period ahead and "no one in the Pentagon, in Central Intelligence or in or out of Congress knows" what Soviet intentions will produce in that period.

The Texan saw no need for an immediate airborne alert but said "we may have to have it six months or a year from now" to insure against having

our major retaliatory power wiped out by a sneak assault.

Mahon's comments were made shortly before Secretary of the Air Force Dudley C. Sharp reiterated the Administration position that total U. S. military power—bombers, missiles, Polaris submarines and mobile task forces—is adequate to discourage enemy attack.

"And, if we follow our plans as we propose to do, it will continue to be adequate," Sharp said.

Sharp conceded the United States may be behind Russia in missiles, but he said the important thing is over-all strength. In this, he said, there is no "deterrence gap," or shortage of power to deter attack.

This is a view, promoted by the Administration, that is expected to undergo more attack from critics as defense plans face further congressional scrutiny this week.

The star witness today will be the Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, who will make twin appearances. He goes before a House committee in the morning and before Senate committees in the afternoon to answer questions about defense, space

projects and related subjects.

The military spending plans, on which Burke will be quizzed, got new criticism yesterday from Sen. Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), chairman of both the Senate Space and Appropriations Committees.

In a transcribed radio interview, Magnuson said, "we've got to spend more money on intercontinental ballistic missiles."

"There's no question about that," he said. Otherwise, he said, this country cannot keep its striking strength up with a potential enemy such as Russia.

Sharp, who was a Capitol Hill witness last week, repeated his general views in a radio-TV quizzing by Sen. Everett Ruess (R-Mass.), taped for Massachusetts stations. But in somewhat stronger words than previously, Sharp said:

"There may be a missile gap, but this is not the important thing... I am convinced there is no deterrence gap. In considering our whole deterrent posture, we must include our bomber force as well as our deployed intermediate-range missiles... We must consider our Polaris submarines, our mobile task forces, the Jupi-

ters which will be deployed in foreign countries.

"The whole complex of these weapons constitutes our overall deterrent posture which I consider to be adequate now and, if we follow our plans as we propose to do, it will continue to be adequate... I do

not see a deterrent gap at any time."